

BETTER TOGETHER:

WHAT STATES, DISTRICTS, AND SCHOOLS CAN DO TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL TURNAROUND

Policy Brief

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State education agencies (SEAs) have had increasing responsibility for improving low-performing schools under the No Child Left Behind Act (2002-2015) and the more recent Every Student Succeeds Act (2015 to present). Currently, SEAs direct statewide school turnaround efforts in about half of all U.S. states – including North Carolina.¹ Although multiple individual turnaround efforts yielded positive results,² on balance turnaround efforts have been unsuccessful.³ SEAs report that they lack the knowledge to drive turnaround.⁴ As the need to transform many of the nation's low performing schools remains urgent, it is essential to identify leverage points where SEAs can maximize the likelihood that their efforts lead to improved student outcomes.

Our research examined the case of North Carolina Transformation (NCT) and factors that may have undermined the reform at different stages of the intervention, from its conceptualization, to implementation, and uptake. Three main questions guided our research⁵ and serve as a roadmap for this brief:

- 1 Did the plan for the NCT school reform contain the main components of effective reforms identified in the research literature?**
- 2 Was the NCT school reform plan implemented as intended?**
- 3 Was the NCT reform used by the school and district staff to develop or improve policies and practices?**



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1 Did the plan for the NCT school reform contain the main components of effective reforms identified in the research literature?

NCT Approach

In the 2015-2016 academic year, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) initiated the NCT intervention, aiming to turnaround the state's 75 lowest performing schools. At its foundation, the NCT approach focused on two primary interventions:⁶

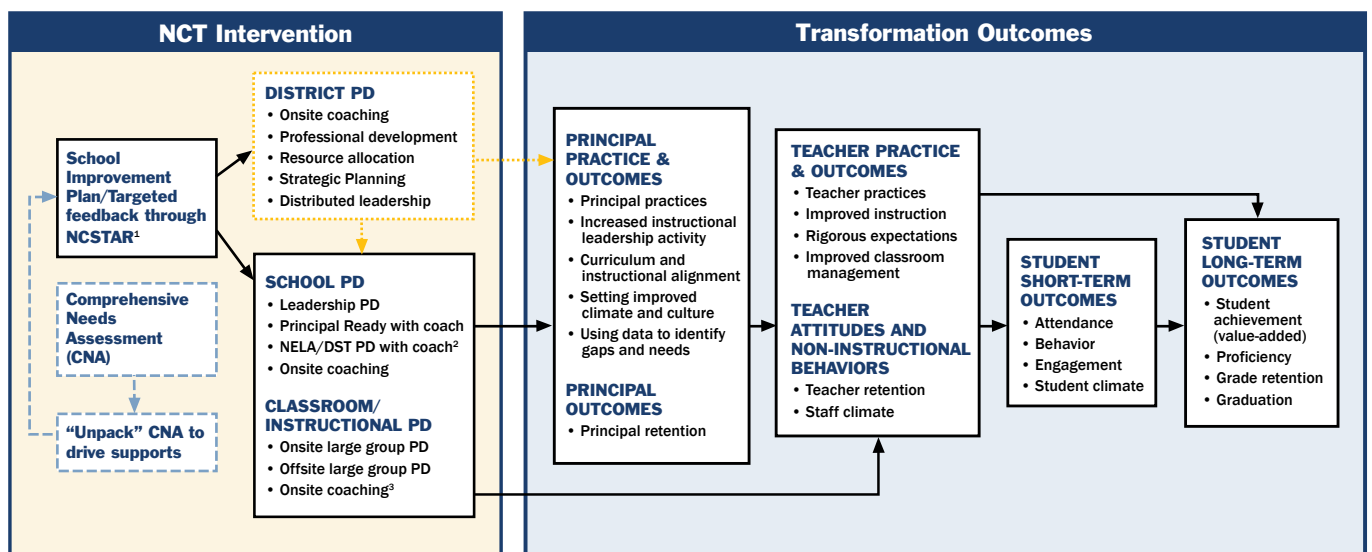
- **School data use and planning.** NC DPI planned to work closely with each school to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and brief the school personnel on its findings, which the schools could then use in constructing their School Improvement Plans (SIP). By working together on both the CNA administration and guiding school staff through the results, DPI envisioned building school staff capacity to carry out these processes on their own in subsequent planning.
- **Multi-level coaching.** To build capacity within low-performing schools and their districts, the NCT approach also included instructional coaching for teachers, school transformation coaching for principals, and district transformation coaching for district leaders. In the NCT design, CNA findings and SIP would help coaches tailor the coaching to the needs of the schools. Finally, the NCT approach included professional development focused on instructional leadership for principals.

Figure 1 illustrates NCT's approach in transforming these schools. The anticipated outcomes of the NCT approach are shown in orange box with the ultimate goal of long-term improvements in students' academic achievement and attainment.

NORTH CAROLINA TRANSFORMATION IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT

NCT was originally planned as a three-year initiative, to be implemented from school year 2015-16 through school year 2017-18. Due to factors outside the NCT initiative (such as legislative changes, dissolution of the NC DPI division leading the effort, and staff layoffs), NCT started a semester late, supports were reduced in Fall 2017, and a redesigned model was implemented beginning January 2018. The number of schools that received direct services decreased from an average of 71 schools per semester prior to the changes in May 2017, to 60 schools in Fall 2017, and only 13 of the original schools in Spring 2018.

FIGURE 1: NCT Approach



NOTE: Blue dashed components denote the intended timeline for activities; Yellow dotted components denote activities that are not selected by all districts; The anticipated outcomes of the NCT approach are shown in the blue box.

¹NCSTAR is the management tool for school improvement planning. ²NC State's Northeast Leadership Academy.

³Onsite coaching could include modeling, instructional planning, observation with feedback, and other interactions.

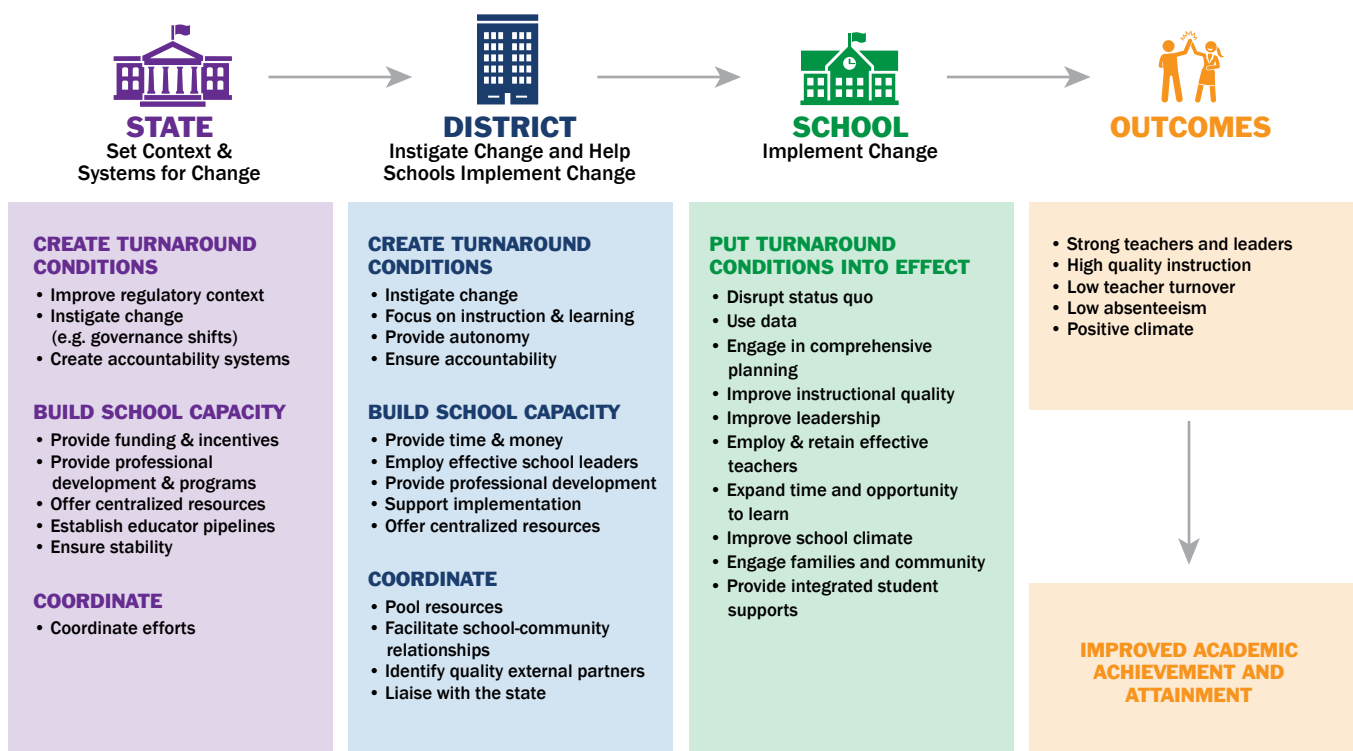
While the intervention was generally well-received by the teachers, principals, and district representatives, it did not produce achievement gains for the students in the participating schools. In 2016, there was no difference in student performance between participating schools and similar low-performing schools that did not receive the NCT intervention; in 2017, students in the participating schools did worse than the students in similar comparison schools.⁷ The negative effects of NCT in 2017 were consistent across all school levels.

Research-Supported Components of Successful School Turnaround

To better understand the degree to which the NCT model reflects a larger evidence base on effective components of school turnaround, we first reviewed the research evidence on effective turnaround approaches (see Figure 2). While the factors that directly affect students' learning experiences occur at the school level, district and state policies, supports, and actions can have critical impact on school turnaround success.⁸ All three levels should be considered to fully understand how to accomplish school turnaround. For a description of the elements of successful turnaround, refer to Appendix A and for a full summary of the evidence, see <https://stateboard.ncpublicschools.gov/resources/other-reports>.



FIGURE 2: Components of Successful School Turnaround



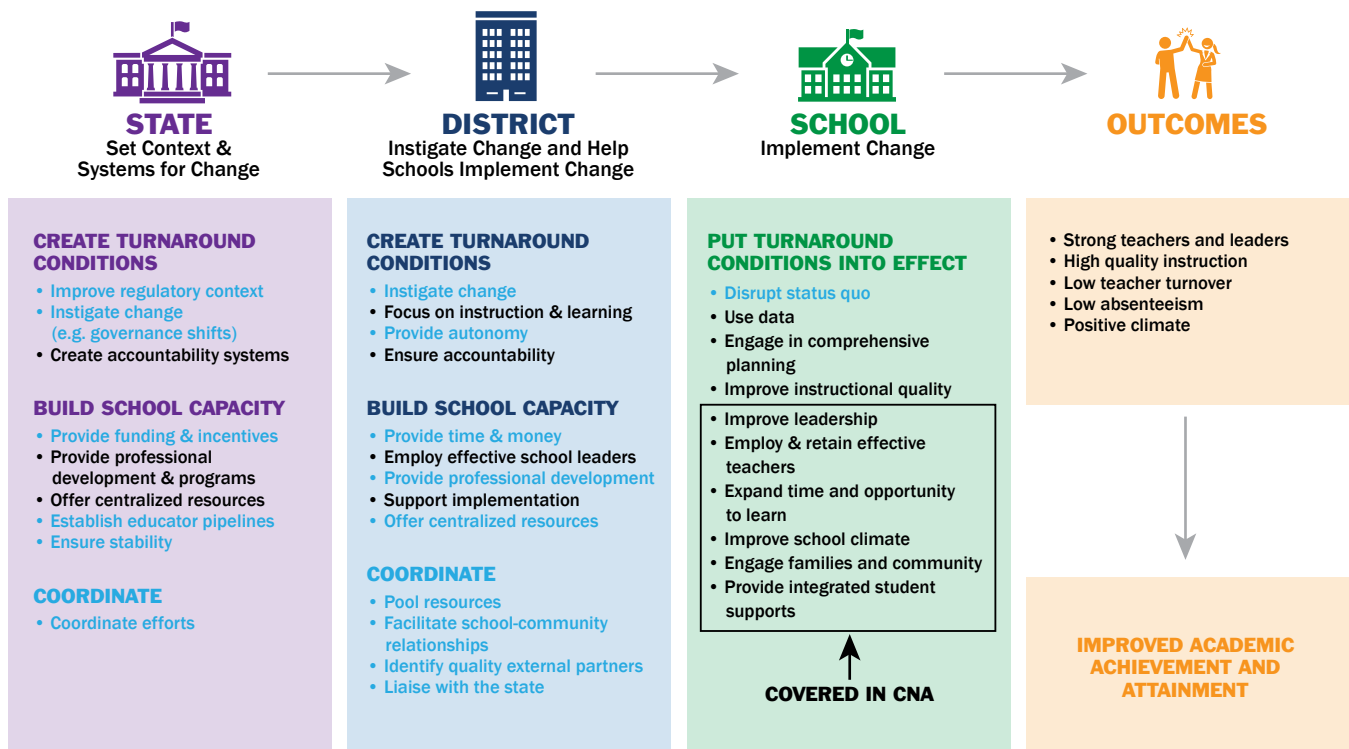
Research-Supported Components in NCT

We found a notable overlap between the NCT intervention components and those suggested by the research, as well as some distinctions and omissions (see Figure 3).⁹ At the school level, several prescribed strategies of the NCT approach reflected the evidence base. Specifically, the NCT model planned to help schools: (a) *use data* in planning for turnaround by conducting the CNA and communicating its results – although it is not fully clear whether there was an intention to support ongoing data collection to monitor progress and refine implementation over time, (b) *engage in comprehensive planning*, by requiring and providing feedback to SIPs, and (c) *improve instruction and school leadership* through individual coaching and group-based professional development. Further, the CNA rubric explicitly evaluated dimensions known to relate to school turnaround (e.g., school climate, family and community engagement, staff improvement and retention; as seen in Figure 3),

with the expectation that these would shape coaching, which would help school staff to make changes in these areas. However, the NCT approach did not prescribe specific strategies (e.g., incentives to retain effective staff). And NCT did not include the element of disruption; it was driven by an approach of offering support rather than mandating change.

At the district level, the NCT model aimed to bolster districts' capacity for supporting school-level turnaround processes by providing district transformation coaches (DTCs) to district leadership and central office staff. District coaching was to focus on instruction and learning, tools for accountability, and support for using data in planning and implementation. However, beyond this guidance, the NCT approach did not prescribe specific actions districts should take. There was no expectation that DTCs would specifically address some of the evidence-supported elements, such as giving schools greater autonomy or instigating change in schools.

FIGURE 3: Evidence-based components in NCT



NOTE: Blue text indicates that the research-supported component was not addressed in the NCT approach. For example, “improve regulatory context” is an evidence-based state-level school turnaround component identified in research that was not included in the NCT approach.



At the state level, the NCT approach embraced several activities that overlapped with the turnaround components suggested by research. The state used their *accountability system*, to designate schools and districts as “low-performing.” The state also aimed to *build capacity across multiple levels of educational systems* by providing coaching to schools and districts and offering centralized resources (e.g., a state-wide, on-line management tool for school improvement planning). However, the state-level activities did not include coordination across districts or additional funding, nor did the state build in protections or systemic structures to ensure stability of the turnaround efforts, leaving them vulnerable to budget and policy fluctuations.

In sum, the NCT approach reflected many of the turnaround factors identified in research, especially at the school level. At the same time, the NCT approach did not involve any profound change that would disrupt old and ineffective patterns, did not incorporate several important structural components identified in research, and relied mostly on individual coaching and professional development at the school and district levels as vehicles of turnaround.

The NCT approach contained evidence-based components such as data use and efforts to improve instruction and leadership. However, it did not involve any profound change that would disrupt the old and ineffective patterns and relied mostly on individual coaching and professional development at the school and district levels as vehicles of turnaround.



Was the NCT school turnaround plan implemented as intended?

This section examines implementation of each of the elements incorporated in the NCT approach—the degree to which it was implemented, as well as the quality of implementation, summarized in Figure 5.¹⁰

Schools

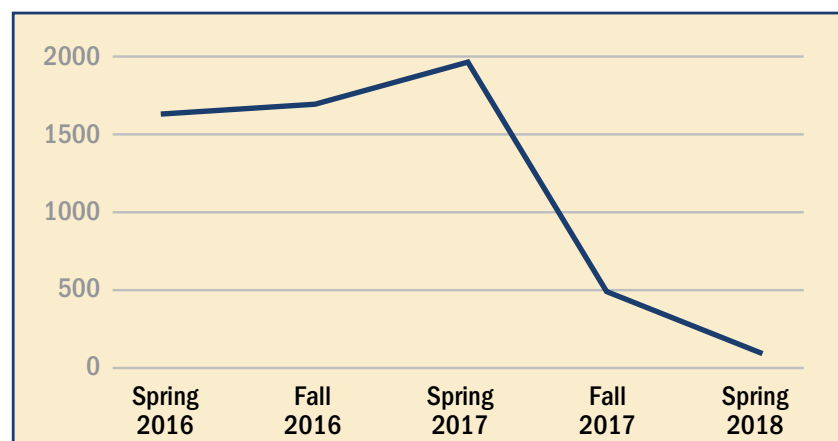
Based on analysis of NC DPI records, by the final year of NCT implementation in 2018, 84% of schools participated in a CNA conducted by NC DPI staff and 77% experienced a CNA unpacking. According to surveyed principals, NC DPI also facilitated planning by providing SIP feedback and support to 91 percent of the NCT schools. To understand the quality of these data use and planning supports, we looked at surveys, interviews, and coach reports. Most principals who received a CNA (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that it accurately identified the school's strength and needs, and principals who were interviewed about the CNA tended to have positive or mixed perceptions of the CNA. Most principals (91%) felt the SIP feedback they received from NC DPI was specific and useful. However, due to capacity issues and other delays beyond NC DPI's control, only about 20 percent of the schools received the CNA in time to use it for developing their SIP. Essentially, the majority of schools were left to plan the SIP without the critical data component of the NCT approach.

Schools perceived data as useful, but data were not always available in time for schools to use to inform their improvement plans.

As planned, NC DPI provided instructional coaching (IC) to teachers and school transformation coaching (STC) to principals, conducting 6,093 coaching visits between January 2016 and June 2018. Shifts in the NCT model resulted in variation in the amount of coaching each school received (see Figure 4). For the three semesters between Spring 2016 and Spring 2017, when NCT was fully implemented, 71 schools received an average of 25 visits per semester. In Fall 2017, 60 schools each had an average of 9 visits per semester. In spring 2018, 13 schools received an average of 16 visits per semester. Principals were more likely to report that the amount of coaching was sufficient in Spring 2017 (78% for STC, 72% for IC) than Spring 2018 (34% for STC and 32% for IC). Regardless of time period, the majority of principals who received coaching reported that the coaching was well-tailored to their needs (70% for STC, over 90% for IC).

The coaching consistently addressed some of the topics critical for turnaround (e.g., 70% of coach visits addressed instructional quality), but spent significantly less time on other important topics, such as data use

FIGURE 4: Total Number of NCT Coaching Visits per Semester





(~29% of all visits), leadership (~21% of all visits), comprehensive planning (~14% of all visits), school climate (~14% of all visits), effective staffing (~10% of all visits), expanding opportunity to learn through student attendance and engagement (~9% of all visits), family and community engagement (~1.5% of all visits), and integrated supports through special education (<1% of visits).¹¹ Although elements like effective staffing, school climate, family and community engagement, and integrated supports featured prominently in the CNA rubric, the relative lack of coaching attention toward them and the absence of other explicit strategies for their improvement suggest the limited implementation of these turnaround components.

Districts

As designated in the NCT approach, DTCs worked with those districts housing NCT schools that said they wanted the district-level coaching. Under the NCT restructuring in fall 2017, the DTC position was cut and replaced with a reduced number of district liaisons. District staff who participated in study interviews reported that generally the DTC visited districts one to two times per month and district personnel uniformly welcomed the NC DPI DTC support. Overall the districts viewed their district transformation coaches as “thought partners” who supported existing district initiatives but found the coaches to be spread too thin to have a substantial impact on district work. No districts mentioned data teams as part of their supports.

Coaching addressed some important topics but not all: e.g. planning, school climate, staffing and other issues were not fully covered.



Districts viewed coaches positively but found them spread too thin to have meaningful impact.

State

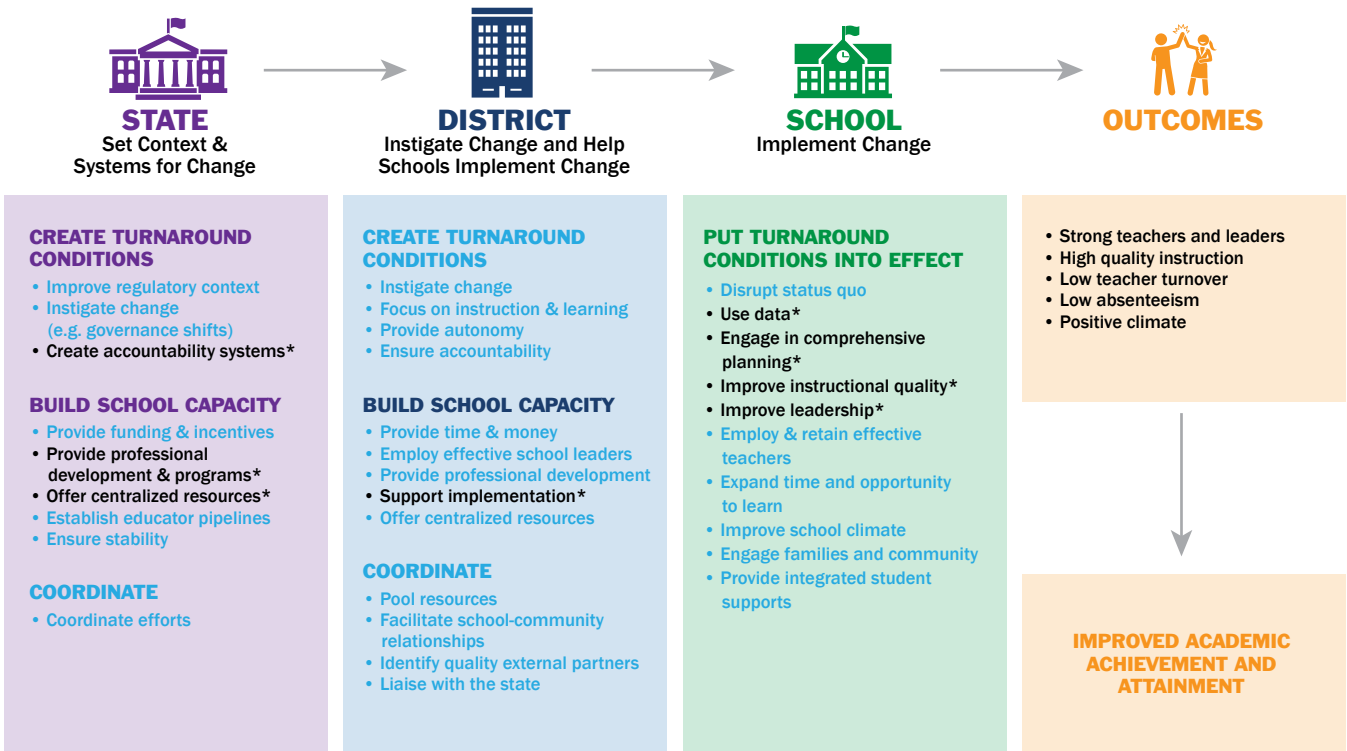
As planned, the NCT intervention utilized centralized resources such as NCStar for school improvement planning, which was an important monitoring and support tool for schools statewide. The state also used its accountability system to prompt change, designating 487 schools and 9 districts as low-performing in SY 2018-2019, and directing resources via the NCT intervention to help turnaround the 75 lowest-performing of those schools, along

with 15 districts serving a high number of low-performing schools. District and school staff, while welcoming the support, noted that the stigma associated with this label magnified the challenges in teacher recruitment, retention, and morale, and family and community perceptions.

NC DPI also aimed to build school and district capacity through the coaching described above. The budget cuts reduced the number of schools that received direct services and the NC DPI restructuring precipitated staff layoffs in the midst of the implementation, cutting the number of coaches serving the schools. Thus, NC DPI provided coaching to improve district and school capacity, but not consistently within or across schools.

The “low-performing” label was often perceived as a stigma for schools and districts and may have affected teacher recruitment, retention, and morale.

FIGURE 5: Alignment between NCT Approach and Implementation



*Delivered with some implementation issues

NOTE: Blue text indicate that the research-supported component was not addressed in the NCT implementation.

In many ways, the NCT intervention was implemented as designed: it supported data use through the CNA and CNA unpacking in most of the schools, and most participating schools reported receiving feedback from NC DPI coaches on their SIPs. When NC DPI provided coaching supports – to principals, teachers, and district staff – they were generally perceived as useful and attuned to the schools’ needs. However, the CNA, SIP, and coaching did not roll out in the planned sequence for some schools.¹² The coaching covered some essential turnaround topics but spent little time on others. In some cases, district coaching was too thin and too unstructured to clearly impact how districts worked with schools. Further, because of the budget cuts and NC DPI restructuring in the midst of the implementation, fewer schools and districts had access to intensive and tailored coaching.

NC DPI budget cuts brought about staff layoffs and a reduction in services – including coaching time and capacity.

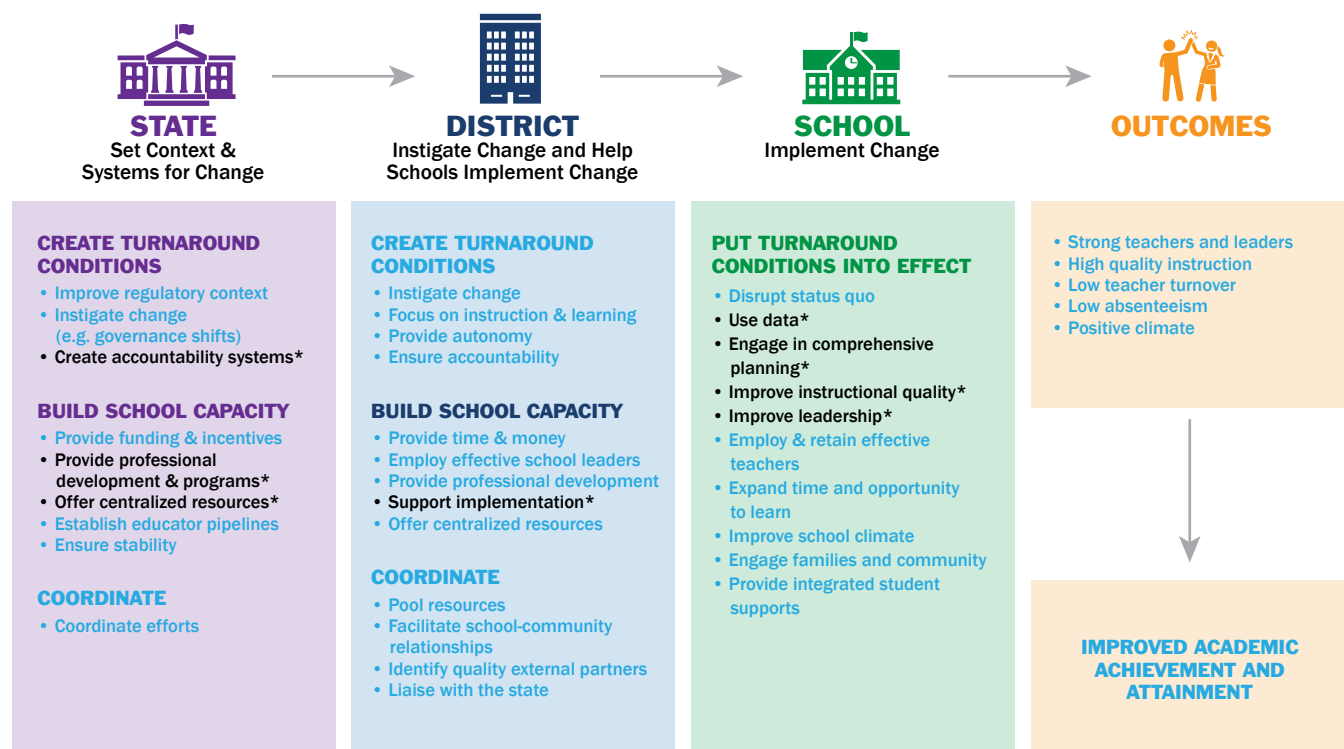
Was the NCT reform used by the school and district staff to develop or improve policies and practices?

Overall NCT was well-received, with most teachers who received coaching reporting using the strategies, most principals reporting that ICs and STCs increased school capacity, and most district respondents perceiving DTCs as supportive. Among teachers who received instructional coaching and participated in our survey, 69 percent reported using strategies from the instructional coaching in their classroom “always” or “most of the time,” with an additional 15 percent reporting they used the strategies “about half the time.” The majority of principals reported that both instructional and school transformation coaching contributed to an increase in school capacity (85% and 74%, respectively). In addition, the majority of principals reported that the CNA administration, unpacking, and SIP feedback contributed to increased school capacity (76%, 72%, and 85% respectively). These principals’ perceptions could indicate that at least some of the practices and skills the school staff had acquired through NC DPI supports were being implemented in their schools.¹³ However, according to interviews with principals and teachers, the fluctuations in service delivery and reduced levels of support made it difficult for them to proceed consistently with their reform work.

Further, take-up of the skills and practices was likely hindered by additional challenges experienced by many NCT schools. For example, each year 40 to 45 percent of NCT schools lost their principals, and NCT schools lost 32 to 34 percent of their teachers.¹⁴ The teacher turnover in NCT schools was higher than in other low-performing schools in the state and teacher turnover did not result in any appreciable change in the percent of ineffective teachers in NCT schools.¹⁵ All district interviewees mentioned school-level barriers, in particular teacher turnover, as impeding the district’s ability to sustain changes.

In sum, principals and teachers who received NCT supports reported that the supports contributed to building school capacity. However, changes in program delivery and substantial staff turnover likely limited the effect of NCT across the schools (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: Alignment between NCT Implementation and Uptake



*Delivered with some implementation issues

NOTE: Blue items indicate that the research-supported component was not addressed in the NCT implementation, and due to implementation issues and limited uptake the outcomes of the NCT approach were not achieved.

Discussion



NCT provided coaching that schools found useful and well-tailored to their needs. But the amount and intensity of coaching was reduced and after the first three semesters was deemed insufficient by majority of the principals and district representatives.

The NCT approach was well-aligned with the research in many ways, but not in some others. The NCT approach recognized the importance of many of the turnaround factors identified in research literature, especially at the school level: use of data and comprehensive planning, improving instruction and leadership, and strengthening the capacity of teachers and principals. Additionally, the NCT approach considered building toward a positive school climate, engaging communities and families, and providing integrated student supports by assessing those factors through the CNA. The NCT model also recognized the roles of the state and districts in the support of school turnaround, envisioned bolstering districts' capacity, and expected to rely on the existing state-wide regulatory frameworks, data systems, and communication tools for successful implementation. At the same time, the NCT approach did not involve any profound systemic change that would disrupt old and ineffective patterns, did not incorporate several important structural components identified in research (e.g., incentives for teachers and principals, expanding learning time), and relied mostly on coaching and professional development at the school and district levels as vehicles of turnaround.

Underlying all levels of the NCT approach was an ethic of “ask but don’t insist.” The NCT approach did not specify a clear set of research-based practices all turnaround schools should have in place, nor held schools and districts accountable for implementing turnaround processes. For example, the NCT approach recognized the importance of improving instructional quality but was silent on how that should happen. Thus, the NCT approach reflected some elements of a research-based theory or change—tailoring turnaround efforts to schools’ needs—but not others—using research-based turnaround practices at the school level and holding schools and districts accountable for improving their practices.

In many ways, the NCT intervention was implemented as designed at the school level: it supported data use and planning through conducting CNAs and facilitating SIPs (though not always in the desired sequence), and provided coaching that schools found useful and well-tailored to their needs. However, the amount and intensity of coaching was reduced partway through implementation, and after the first three semesters, was deemed insufficient by majority of the principals and district representatives. In addition, throughout the intervention, coaching topics focused mostly on instructional quality, data use, and leadership issues, and paid comparatively little attention to such critical school turnaround processes as hiring and retaining effective staff, school climate, family and community engagement, opportunity to learn, and integrated student supports. At the district level, NCT delivered helpful supports for districts through district transformation coaching, but – while on balance perceived as helpful – district coaching was inconsistent and lacked focus and continuity for most districts. NCT supports to districts did not consistently translate into districts improving school capacity.

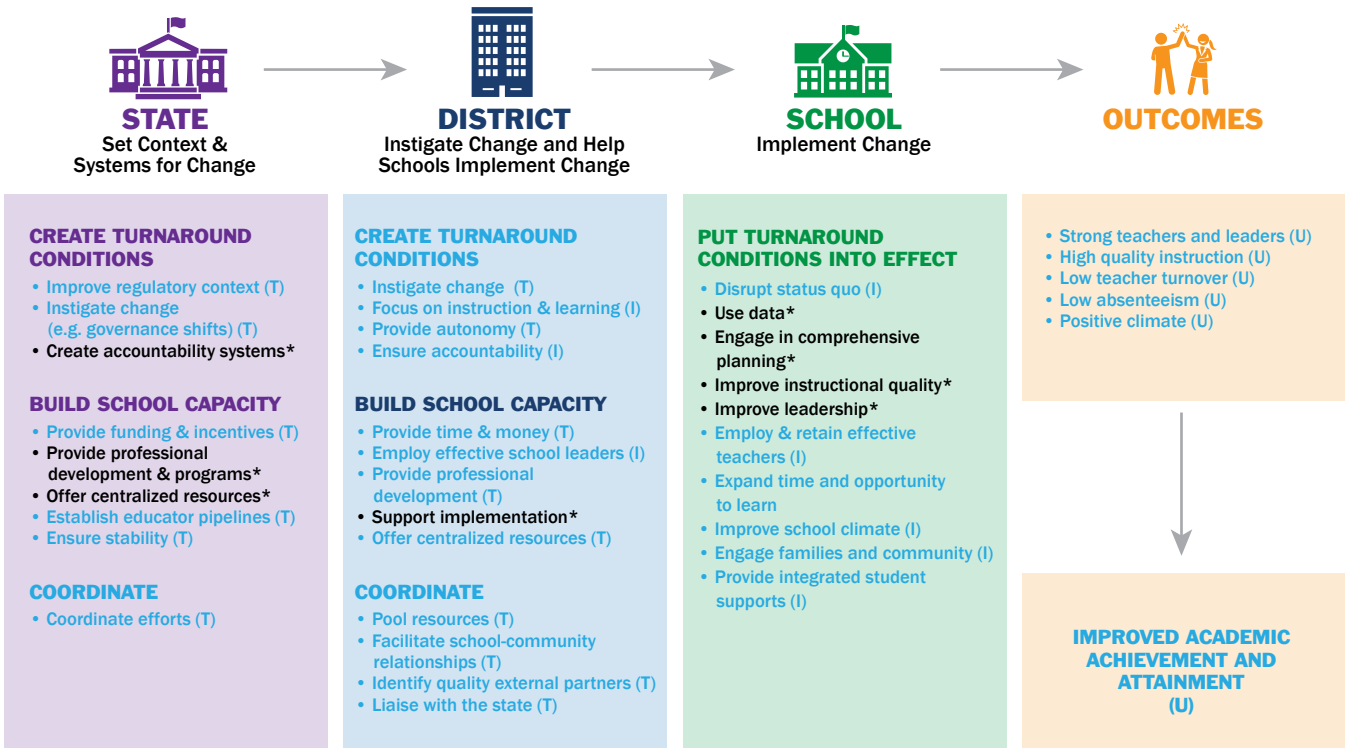
Underlying all levels of the NCT approach was the ethic of, “ask but don’t insist.”

Finally, this study looked at whether the supports provided led to real changes in schools' capacity for improvement. Principals and teachers who received NCT supports reported that they used the skills they learned through coaching and, in general, NCT supports contributed to building school capacity. However, changes in program delivery, substantial staff turnover, and student absenteeism and mobility have likely limited the effect of NCT on instruction and student outcomes across the schools.



Put together, “slippage” at different stages of the NCT effort – its conceptualization, implementation, and uptake – may have limited its impact in schools (see Figure 7 for a summary of “slippage” across different stages of the project). While the NCT design incorporated a number of important turnaround components, it mainly focused on coaching individuals, with less attention to structural barriers to and strategies for change (e.g., teacher turnover or time for professional development). Offering more fundamental supports, such as increased teacher pay, could amplify the potential effects of school- and district-level coaching.

FIGURE 7: Slippage at Each Stage: Theory, Implementation, and Uptake



*Delivered with some implementation issues

NOTE: (T) indicates the element was lost from the research-based to the conceptualization of the NCT approach. (I) indicates the element was lost during implementation. (U) indicates the element was lost during uptake of the intervention.

Another possible obstacle to the success of the NCT approach is that the intervention did not prescribe the actions for schools and districts to take to attain positive results within the desired categories (e.g., improve instructional quality). Such an approach made it difficult to ensure that important evidence-based components of turnaround were implemented. As noted throughout, the instability that accompanied the NCT implementation also may have undermined the reform processes.

Key Takeaways for States, Districts and Schools

STATES CAN:	DISTRICTS CAN:	SCHOOLS CAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create regulatory context supportive of innovation needed for school turnaround • Secure and distribute adequate resources to turnaround schools and districts • Specify a clear set of research-based practices all turnaround schools should have in place, and hold schools and districts accountable for implementing turnaround processes • Ensure stability of the turnaround practices through providing consistent funding and supports during the initiative, and build systems and structures to support the changes over time • Address structural barriers to school turnaround (e.g., teacher turnover, student absenteeism) • Support efforts to strengthen teacher pipelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instigate change • Address structural barriers to school turnaround (e.g., teacher turnover, student absenteeism) • Employ high-quality school leaders • Provide supports to build school capacity, including professional development, time, money, and centralized turnaround resources • Provide resources and infrastructure to monitor schools' turnaround implementation and support schools' internal and external accountability • Work to engage families and community in school life and turnaround processes • Provide schools with needed resources to address non-academic barriers to achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement systemic change to disrupt the status quo • Employ high-quality teachers • Improve instructional quality and distribute leadership • Engage families and communities • Improve school climate • Establish robust continuous improvement processes • Provide integrated, whole-child supports to address non-academic barriers to turnaround

APPENDIX A

Evidence Review: Components of Successful School Turnaround

Schools

Implement turnaround in schools. Early turnaround research found that **disrupting the status quo** can overcome inertia and other barriers to successful reforms that might otherwise limit reforms,¹⁶ and some researchers recommend a mix of incremental and disruptive change to mobilize and build the turnaround effort.¹⁷ Successful turnaround efforts build on this “shock to the system” by **using data**¹⁸ for **comprehensive improvement planning**.¹⁹ State and districts supports, such as access to data, guidance on research-based effective practices, and training, can help school staff assess needs and plan effectively.²⁰

Strong teaching and leadership are at the heart of effective schools,²¹ and research demonstrates that

both replacing staff²² and training current staff²³ contribute to better outcomes.²⁴ Specifically, successful turnaround schools **employ and retain effective teachers** through hiring and professional development; **improve instructional quality** through standards-based curricula²⁵ and a coherent overall program;²⁶ and **improve school leadership** using leadership-focused reform models²⁷ and collaborative leadership teams.²⁸

Finally, research demonstrates that schools can improve academic and non-academic outcomes by providing a better learning environment, including more **opportunity to learn** through extended time;²⁹ a student-centered, positive **school climate**;³⁰ and actively **engaged families and communities**. Schools also can reduce barriers to learning by providing **integrated, whole-child supports**.³¹



Districts

Instigate and help schools implement turnaround. Districts can create the conditions for school turnaround, build school capacity for turnaround, and provide targeted support to high-priority schools. To **create the conditions for turnaround**, districts may instigate change with new policies or staff; establish a clear, district-wide focus on instruction and learning; provide school leaders with the autonomy to enact effective practices; and ensure accountability for implementation and results, balancing internal accountability (i.e., staff's commitment to and ownership of turnaround) and external accountability (i.e., externally assessments of agreed upon indicators of improvement) to effect sustained change.³²

Districts can help **build school capacity** for turnaround. To do so, districts may **budget resources—time and money**—for school staff to carry out the reform; **recruit and selectively retain more effective school leaders**, provide professional development to help school staff with the knowledge and skills needed to improve the school; **support implementation** through fidelity monitoring and feedback; and offer centralized resources such as data and research.³³ Another way that districts help build school capacity is to **identify quality external partners** who can fill the expertise and management gaps within the turnaround schools.³⁴

Finally, districts can **play a coordinating role** to support school turnaround by. For example, districts may pool resources to be used by low performing schools with similar needs; facilitate exchange of best practices through professional learning communities; engage the community about turnaround challenges and efforts; or liaise with states to protect the stability of school-level efforts, advocate for additional resources if needed, and advise the state on the regulatory frameworks conducive to school turnaround.³⁵

States

Create context and impetus, provide resources, and ensure stability. States can and do play many of the same roles as districts, by establishing policies conducive to school turnaround, directly providing supports, and coordinating stakeholders and initiatives. States are well positioned to **create the conditions for turnaround** in several ways, including **improving regulatory context** to be more conducive to school improvement and potentially spur dramatic changes in school innovation, functioning, and performance.³⁶ States can also ensure a stable policy environment to give schools and districts the space to design, implement, monitor, and adapt their turnaround efforts.³⁷ States can further **instigate change through governance shifts**, by moving low-performing schools from district management to other management entities, or through authorization of state takeover.³⁸ States can **create accountability systems**. Accountability, tied to rewards, support, and sanctions, appears to improve school performance; however, there is evidence that labeling schools as low-performing, without additional supports, does not improve student outcomes.³⁹

States can build the capacity of educational systems. States can bolster turnaround efforts by: offering **funding** to schools **and incentives** to school leaders and teachers to help build strong teams;⁴⁰ directly **providing professional development** or materials to districts and schools⁴¹ **offering centralized resources** that would be hard to develop at the district or school level such as research syntheses and lists of approved technical assistance partners⁴² and finally, **establishing a pipeline of highly qualified educators**,⁴³ prepared to serve in low-performing schools. States may also **coordinate** by facilitating cross-school and cross-district collaborations across the state—communities of practices—and thereby empowering experience exchange and pooling of resources.⁴⁴

Citations and Notes

- 1 **VanGronigen, B. A., & Meyers, C. V. (2019).** How State Education Agencies Are Administering School Turnaround Efforts: 15 Years After No Child Left Behind. *Educational Policy*, 33(3), 423-452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817691846>
- 2 e.g., **Carlson, D., & Lavertu, S. (2016).** Charter school closure and student achievement: Evidence from Ohio. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 95, 31-48. **Henry, G. T., Guthrie, J. E., & Townsend, L. (2015).** Outcomes and impacts of North Carolina's initiative to turn around the lowest-achieving schools. The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina State University. Google Scholar. **Sun, M., Penner, E. K., & Loeb, S. (2017).** Resource-and approach-driven multidimensional change: Three-year effects of School Improvement Grants. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(4), 607-643.
- 3 See, for example, **Dragoset, L., Thomas, J., Herrmann, M., Deke, J., James-Burdumy, S., & Lee Luca, D. (2019).** The impact of school improvement grants on student outcomes: Findings from a national evaluation using a regression discontinuity design. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 12(2), 215-250.
- 4 **Klute, M., Cherasaro, T., & Apthorp, H. (2016).** Summary of Research on the Association between State Interventions in Chronically Low-Performing Schools and Student Achievement. REL 2016-138. Regional Educational Laboratory Central. **Tanenbaum, C., Boyle, A., Graczewski, C., James-Burdumy, S., Dragoset, L., & Hallgren, K. (2015).** State Capacity to Support School Turnaround. NCEE Evaluation Brief. NCEE 2015-4012. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. **VanGronigen, B. A., & Meyers, C. V. (2019).** How State Education Agencies Are Administering School Turnaround Efforts: 15 Years After No Child Left Behind. *Educational Policy*, 33(3), 423-452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817691846>
- 5 Data included spring 2017 and 2018 principal surveys (75% and 57% response rates, respectively), spring 2018 teacher surveys (44% response rate), interviews with principals, teachers and district personnel in fall 2016, spring 2017, and spring 2018, and coaching reports.
- 6 **Zimmer, R., Henry, G. T., & Kho, A. (2017, December 1).** The Effects of School Turnaround in Tennessee's Achievement School District and Innovation Zones. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(4), 670-696. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373717705729>. **Henry, G. T., Pham, L. D., Kho, A., & Zimmer, R. (2020).** Peeking into the black box of school turnaround: A formal test of mediators and suppressors. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 42(2), 232-256.
- 7 **Henry, G. T. & Harbatkin, E. (forthcoming).** The Next Generation of State Reforms to Improve their Lowest Performing Schools: An Evaluation of North Carolina's School Transformation Intervention, *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.
- 8 **Knudson, J., Shambaugh, L., & O'Day, J. (2011).** Beyond the School: Exploring a Systemic Approach to School Turnaround. Policy and Practice Brief. California Collaborative on District Reform.
- 9 One important consideration is that, for the most part, the NCT theory of change incorporated activities that aimed to build local capacity to carry out improvement efforts, but did not prescribe the processes and strategies that schools and districts should use to achieve positive turnaround results.
- 10 Specific indicators of quality may differ. For example, high quality support for data use differs from high quality coaching.
- 11 While planning did not receive much attention in coaching (14% of coach visits), it was addressed well in initial CNA and SIP activities.
- 12 **Henry & Harbatkin, forthcoming**
- 13 In general, principals of NCT treatment schools were more likely to report that coaching increased their school's capacity for improvement compared to principals of similarly low-performing North Carolina schools.
- 14 Longitudinal database of statewide administrative data maintained by the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's Educational Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC).
- 15 **Henry & Harbatkin, forthcoming**
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The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305E150017 to Vanderbilt University. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education. This short working paper has been approved for circulation by RAND Education and Labor but has not been formally edited or peer reviewed. It can be quoted and cited without permission of the authors, provided the source is clearly referred to as a working paper. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

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